

# BOTTLE SERVICE

COCKTAIL HOUR

**Go Bananas** Liven up your cocktails with the world's favorite fruit.

By Betsy Andrews



Fruity banana liqueur balances bitter espresso in the Banana-Espresso Flip (p. 49).

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**B**ANANAS ARE THE WORLD'S most popular fruit. And by the looks of today's cocktail menus, we're not just eating them; we're drinking them, too. Perhaps that's because they're so versatile. Bartenders are infusing spirits with bananas for added body and sweetness, as in the minimalist Banana Jameson at New York City's Forgiatore, where the banana-enhanced whiskey is served simply over one big rock. They're pureeing them for classics, as with the frozen banana daiquiri at Cafe La Trova in Miami's Little Havana, and for newfangled creations, such as the mezcal-laced Salty Saturn at Chicago's Asador Bastian. There, bartenders roast the bananas before blitzing them with miso and passion fruit.

Pros are also batching up banana-flavored mixers. At Manhattan's Tiki Chick and Lark outside Philadelphia, they macerate the fruit and peel, respectively, for a fragrant banana *oleo saccharum*. In Playa del Carmen, Mexico, at the Rosewood Mayakoba's Zapote Bar, they

create a rich, uncooked syrup to amp up milk punch by vacuum-sealing fresh bananas and sugar for 24 hours. The peels hold flavor to be extracted, too. At the Four Seasons Hotel Los Angeles at Beverly Hills, they soak the yellow skins in Japanese whiskey for a fruity highball spiked with housemade banana-peel bitters. Mixologists at Sanjh Restaurant & Bar in Irving, Texas, even steep banana leaves in lychee juice for their rum-centric *Smoke & Silk*. Needless to say, there are bunches of inspiration out there for your own creations.

But the easiest way to go bananas in your home bar is to mix in a banana liqueur. TV chef and *Little Portugal* cookbook author Lauren Covas is a fan. Banana liqueur lends a taffylike aroma to her Banana Boulevardier (recipe at right) and a banana-bread vibe to her Banana-Espresso Flip (recipe p. 49). Try one of the four recommended on p. 49 to turn even your everyday nip into something tropical and unexpected.

### Banana Boulevardier

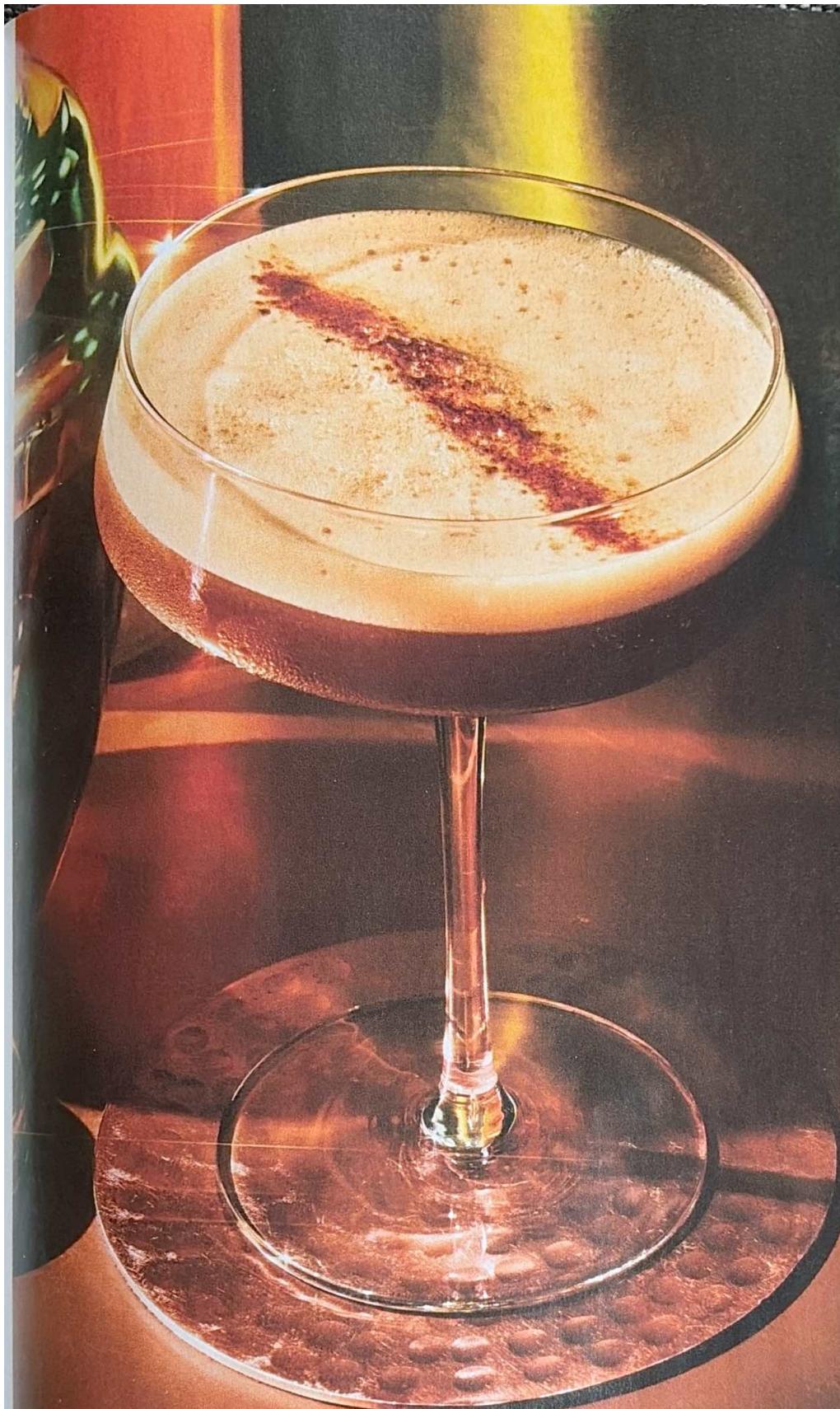
TOTAL 5 MIN; SERVES 1

*This fruity, inviting cocktail is a riff on the boulevardier, a bourbon-based drink invented in Paris in the 1920s. This version swaps out bittersweet Campari for a high-quality banana liqueur (see Note), which adds sweetness and amplifies the caramel notes in the bourbon. Sweet vermouth adds a bit of spice. An orange peel twist, the traditional garnish, gives a pop of citrus and a touch of balancing bitterness.*

- 2 Tbsp. (1 oz.) banana liqueur
- 2 Tbsp. (1 oz.) bourbon
- 2 Tbsp. (1 oz.) sweet vermouth
- Dash of Angostura bitters
- Orange peel twist, for garnish

**Combine** banana liqueur, bourbon, vermouth, and bitters in a mixing glass filled with ice. Stir until well chilled, about 30 seconds. Strain into a rocks glass with a large ice cube. Garnish with an orange peel twist.—LAUREN COVAS

**NOTE** You can find banana liqueurs, such as *Pairidaezu Crème de Banane*, at most well-stocked bottle shops.



## Banana-Espresso Flip

TOTAL 5 MIN; SERVES 1

*This cocktail is what happens when banana bread meets an espresso martini. Earthy, bitter espresso blends seamlessly with the caramel notes in dark rum and the sweet, fruity notes of banana liqueur. While a flip cocktail traditionally uses a whole egg in addition to a base spirit and a sweetener, this lighter version riffs on the standard approach by using just an egg white for a lighter texture and less richness. Choose between bold espresso powder or aromatic nutmeg for a garnish to top off this sweet, nutty, delicious cocktail.*

**3** Tbsp. (1½ oz.) dark rum  
**2** Tbsp. espresso, cooled  
**½** Tbsp. (¾ oz.) banana liqueur  
**1** Tbsp. simple syrup  
**1** large egg white  
Espresso powder or ground nutmeg, for garnish

**1.** Place rum, espresso, banana liqueur, simple syrup, and egg white in a cocktail shaker; cover with lid, and shake for about 15 seconds.

**2.** Add ice to cocktail shaker; cover with lid, and shake vigorously until egg white is frothy and mixture is chilled, about 15 seconds. Pour through a fine wire-mesh strainer into a coupe glass. Garnish with espresso powder or ground nutmeg. —LAUREN COVAS

## 4 GREAT BANANA LIQUEURS

### RHUM CLÉMENT BANA CANNE (\$35)

The big banana aroma here leads into a sugarcane-forward, grassy sweetness in this rhum agricole-based liqueur.

### PAIRIDAËZA CRÈME DE BANANE (\$37)

The subtle taste of this French liqueur is remarkably close to that of fresh bananas, though plantains are actually used to make it.

### GIFFARD BANANE DU BRÉSIL (\$40)

This is chef Lauren Covas' favorite banana liqueur. She describes it as "smooth and not too sweet."

### TEMPUS FUGIT SPIRITS CRÈME DE BANANE (\$40)

This rich, lightly spicy version from a specialist in historically inspired liqueurs is a favorite of pro bartenders.